# *American Women Missionaries and Pioneers Collection*

## *Part 1: Missionaries*

# The Monona Cheney Papers, 1918-1932

### *Series I*

Outgoing Correspondence

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Yenching - Peiping.
Feb. 18, 1930.

Dearest family.

Just a note tonight to show you I'm back at Yenching on scheduled time, having arrived yesterday. Just a month today since I was taken sick, and four weeks since I went to the hospital! Such a way to spend a vacation. But I'm grateful it was vacation.

I'm "taking it easy" this week; and to teach one class tomorrow, and one the next day, and so on, hoping to do my whole schedule next week. Everyone is so good about helping, and urging me to be careful. And I'm trying to be careful enough without overdoing it!

My roommate is sitting studying, and has made me laugh myself nearly sick asking me "have you told your mama that you had your passport a year ago —

that you've already given away all your old clothes so you can begin to pack — that you gave me all your left-over Christmas cards? Etc. etc." She's a perfect circus, and an awful tease — we do have the best times together. She was pretty badly scared when I got sick; after my fever had gone down the second day she said, "It doesn't make any difference if we Chinese get a fever — we have them so often; but when you foreigners get them, you die very easily!" Now that I'm home again, she's rather enjoying my having to rest and go slow; she said today, "It's rather fun to see something that you have to give in to!"

I am so sorry Father's neuritis has been acting so badly. If there is an operation that will relieve it without

killing the nerve, I'd certainly have it done.

By the way, I've been reading "Disturbing our Nerves" - a book I've long wanted to read. And I'm enjoying it much; there is a lot of fine sense in it. I've done quite a little reading the last couple of weeks, though most of it wasn't very deep.

Thank-you, mother, for Auntie May's check; that and Aunt Emma's and Aunt Orpha's - $13.50 gold - brot $36.40 Mex. at present exchange! It's a good time to sell gold, but a mighty poor time to buy it!

I'm going to try to write Lois and Marge this week - haven't thanked them for the Christmas presents yet.

It's my (present) bed-time, so I'll stop; just wanted you to know I'm "right side up with care"!

Heaps of love -

Morena.

Yenching, March 1st. 1930

Dearest family of mine,

The fact that I'm hitting the keys, and that I haven't gotten at this letter until today ought to be sufficient proof that I am pretty well back to normal! Have been doing full work this week, with the exception of my Chinese atudy (I still have to have a little extra sleep), and am feeling very well. Am still taking medicine to make my cheeks rosy, but two or three people have told me I didn't look like I'd seen a hospital - so you see the marks are not very clear.

This is Saturday morning. I had planned to go in to see the tailor this morning, ad call on Katherine Wolferz who is in the hospital at present; but there were so many things that needed to be done right away, that I postponed the trip until afternoon. Don't know whether I shall see the tailor or not, as I shall not have much time, but shall see Katherine anyway. I may go in in the Galts' new car, if it isn't full; they've just bought it, and I've not been in it yet.

Mother's letter saying you would see about the coat, came yesterday. By this time you have my later one, changing my mind; but if in the meanwhile you had bought the coat, send it along. I'm quite in a muddle about my clothes; why in the world did they have to choose this particular time to change the styles so radically? I detest the new styles - and I will not make any dresses princess style (one look at that old family picture of ours in enough for me!), and I don't want short waist-lines when the long ones are so much more becoming; so what to do with my make-over clothes I do not know. One of the two best foreign dressmakers in Peking told someone the other day that "large people would not pay very much attention to the new styles; they would continue to wear what was becoming" - which was some comfort, as is also Marie Adams' assurance that women in America are not wearing the new styles much, spite of style magazines and show-windows. So if I appear in U.S.A. looking like last year instead of this, you will know it is not because I don't know better, but because I refuse to do as well as I know. I don't mind adding a little length, though most of my dresses ~~xxxx~~ are already quite respectable as to that.

My office has been in use this morning by one of my senior girls who used it to tell a man frankly that she isn't going to marry him! I've not heard yet the result of the conference, but probably shall in a day or two. I feel sorry for the man, but am glad she is doing it, since I'm fairly sure it wouldn't be a happy arrangement. It's the hold-over af a childhood arrangement; what messes they do make for the young people of this generation!

Had supper last night down at the Home Economics practice house, where three of the girls and one of the teachers (a former Keen school pupil of mine) are living and running the house this semester. The supper was delicious, and it was much fun to be with them.

My Chinese roommate has suddenly adopted a five-months' old boy, which she bought from a very poor mother and father for the

handsome sum of eleven dollars! He is a fine baby, but the family had six children, and had already gotten rid of one, and were trying to sell this one (even a boy) on the street because they simply could not support so many. Tsengti has a brother and sister-in-law in Peking, who have no children, so she made them a present! They will bring up the youngster, and she will support it. I tell her she has lots of courage; but she is quite pleased with herself. The baby is lucky, all right; and the new parents are as happy as if all their family arrangements hadn't been upset in an hour (they didn't know the baby was coming, until she appeared at their house with it one night last week).

You already know that our annual spring war looks imminent - though we are still hoping that we may get through without it. The trouble is the inevitable outcome of a dictatorship, but I do wish that people could see that they need a strong government if they are ever to have a good one. There is plenty of dissatisfaction with the present regime; but I doubt if Feng and Yen would do any better. We hope they'll come to some kind of an agreement without fighting again.

It is time for me to stop if I'm to get ready to go to the city.

Heaps of love to you all,

Mamma

Yenching - Peking,
March 10, 1930.

Dearest family,

Monday morning, and I'm just through an eight o'clock class. Have no more today, so I'll write you before I get down to the odds and ends of things that are always a part of Monday morning. In a few minutes I'm going over to the doctor's office for my annual vaccination which never works - but I prefer to keep on the safe side, at least of small-pox.

I'm fully back to normal now - doing all my work without even remembering that I ever was sick.

Mother's letter of Feb. 11th came Saturday, enclosing my nine-year-old letter to Father, and mother's comments on my talkativeness! But mother, don't cut up the letter next time; the other side of that letter of yours sounded very interesting! You're right; they have given me a good laugh; and the letter I wrote brings back a good many memories of that summer Father was ill - I can remember the boxes of flowers we sent him, and that recital in the Unitarian Church; hadn't thought of them for years. If you have any more such entertainments, save them for me.

I have had Ida Frantz here over the week-end; she came up for a meeting of middle school teachers on Saturday, and stayed until last night with me. It was so good to have her - she is such an inspiration always. I shall be going down to Tientsin some week-end soon for a Conference Religious Education Committee meeting; don't know yet which week-end it will be, but probably three weeks from now. This next week-end I am hoping to have Lelia Hinkley out from Peking; she has just had word from Colorado of her mother's death. We may go to the Hills, or we may stay here; I am waiting for word from her. We have a holiday this week Wednesday - anniversary of Sun Yat Sen's death; I'm hoping to spend it in Peking, getting some tailoring and shopping done - want to see if the tailor can fix my spring coat so the customs officials won't turn me out for an immigrant! Of course in the middle of July I shall not be in great need of wraps on the southern route!

Mother's letter gave me a great thrill over Auntie May's proposition for us to have her apartment next year. The only drawback to that is that Auntie May will be where I can't see much of her; but if she is going anyway, I certainly should love to be there. And as for renting the house, Daddy mine, don't put any ~~tricks~~ in that wheel, please; I really don't think that the furniture your three children have grown up on can be very badly ruined, do you? Isn't there someone who would like to take it just through the school year, so we could have it again in June? I'm having the nicest dreams; hope they don't get spoiled for lack of a renter!

We have had one or two lectures recently on the famine conditions, which are worse than ever. One was by Grover Clark, whose report has been in the home papers, I think. He says compared with present conditions the famine of 1920-21 was only a drop in the ocean.

It certainly is too bad that MacMurray and the head of the Red Cross spoiled the plan of the U.S.Farm Bureau to sell $25,000,000 worth of grain to the Chinese government. I suppose the Red Cross, having declined to help with the famine relief, feels it necessary now to save its face; but Judge Payne's statement that grain is rotting on the siding for lack of transportation is simply not true. It is true there are not as many trains available as one could wish; but Grover Clark said the government was giving free transportation, and remitting all duties of every kind - amounting to a gift of one dollar for every dollar given from America; so much also for the Red Cross statement that the more America gives, the less the Chinese are giving! We certainly are glad that so many people in America are giving anyway. J.E.Baker (the man whom the Sills know) who was here in 1920-21 in charge of the Red Cross relief, and again last year for the Famine Relief Commission, has just come back to China as advisor to the Nanking Department of Railways; he had hardly arrived when the Commission asked for him for relief work for six months, and the govenment gave its consent and his salary; that means a good deal - for he is A-1 at the business.

We are hoping that the threatened war may be averted. Last news is that Yen and Feng may go to Japan; they remind one of the old Mizpah benediction "The Lord watch between me and thee" - because we can't trust each other otherwise! I fail to see what good they would do if they should get into power in Nanking; they would probably be no better than Chiang; I do hope he will be allowed to stay in power for a while longer, until the idea of a rebellion every few months has had a chance to die out a little.

Spring has put in its appearance; we had a week of rain and snow, which were a Godsend to the farmers, then a week of cloudy weather, and now the sun is out full force. Yesterday was lovely, and today is the same. The ground is pretty well thawed out, so planting will begin soon.

Time to get to work, I guess, so will end this. It is only a little over three months now until I shall be starting to you-wards! Lois and Margie, if you don't write me in a double-quick hurry the answers to a few of my questions about your bed-room color schemes and my Japanese tea-set, etc., I shall not have the slightest idea what to bring home to you! Don't try to write a letter; it won't take very long to answer those questions I've asked you, and a page will be sufficient. I don't want to bring you a green rocking-chair for a blue room - or pack my tea-set home if nobody wants it!

Heaps of love to you all,

Mamma

Yenching - Peiping,
March 17th.

Dear Family,

This will not be long, as very little has happened since a week ago; but there is a boat going out soon, so I'll write a short letter to catch it. Have finally gotten a note written to Lois and Margie, and will send their copy of this with it.

Can't remember whether or not I told you that I am now sure of my sailing from Kobe July 6th, on the President Cleveland. Went to the American Express last Wednesday to see about boats from Tientsin to Kobe, but they did not yet have complete schedules, so I'll have to wait a little while. Another of our Peking W.F.M.S. and the Bible Society family are to go on the same boat, and some Korea missionaries, so we ought to have a good time. I'm hoping to get a sailing to Kobe that will give me two or three days here after Commencement, and a couple of days in Japan, but may not be quite so lucky.

Last week Wednesday was a holiday, and I spent it in Peking shopping and doing other odds and ends. This afternoon I have to go in to the tailor's to try on my made-over coat and dress, and to the shoemaker for a pair of shoes. Suppose I shall have to make frequent trips from now on, for various things.

Saturday I took a hike with Mrs. Frame; we walked nearly three hours - my first trial since I came from the hospital, and it didn't seem to have any bad effects. That evening I had a party for my Senior girls; so you see I'm quite able to do things.

Looks like our "settlement" of the war question was to be short-lived; yesterday's paper says the rebellion is still brewing. I do hope it will blow over, but it looks precarious.

Spring vacation comes three weeks from now - a whole week of it. I shall not stray far from home probably; if the Seniors want to go to the Hills, I'll have a few days there; otherwise I shall be here and in the city, as it will be my last opportunity for any consecutive shopping before school is out. The Seniors are very busy with their theses; so I'm not sure whether or not they'll want to take the time, but I'm hoping they will. They are such a dear bunch; I'm rather glad to be leaving Yenching when they do; I should be lost next year without them.

There's a fly buzzing in my window this minute, and we found a moth yesterday; spring is here to stay, and we'll have to be sunning our woolens. It'sgglorious weather - spring fever has such a long run here!

You see I haven't much to say, so had better stop. The feeling that I'll soon be where I can talk to you spoils all I might say.

Lovingly - Monona.

P.S. Mother, don't let Mr. Fleck too soon after I get home. I'll surprise the landlord before!

Yenching - Peking,
April 1st, 1930.

Dearest family,

My April Fool seems to have gotten ahead of itself, inasmuch as I've not written you for two weeks. So I'll not try another one today, but get this written to go out on the mail tomorrow.

My last two week-ends have gone into getting over the effects of a cold. A week ago Saturday I stayed in bed all day, and in the house most of Sunday; then went to work again. Thursday I had to spend another day in bed for some reason or other, probably the transference of my cold to the abdominal region; and by that time some of my friends were so sure I needed an extra rest that I went back to the hospital on Friday and spent the week-end there with the doctor looking me over. (My roommate was much concerned; in her mixed language I "ding mei yo resistance la" - which being interpreted means that my resistance is low!). But the doctor says I'm O.K., except that I still need to go a little slower than I did last semester. So I'm dropping my Chinese study and slowing up on one or two other things; and expect to be quite all right. "Needing a furlough", my friends say, which makes me quite disgusted in the light of my fine health up till Christmas. Just you wait till I've had a month of salt sea air, and see if I look like I needed a furlough!

I now have my last reservation made; am to leave Tientsin for Kobe on June 28th, arriving July 2nd. That will give me three days there before sailing on the sixth; then I'll have twenty-four hours in Yokohama. You may send your mail to me here until nearly the last of May; then one or two letters care of S.S.President Cleveland, Kobe or Yokohama; then same steamship at Honolulu (arriving June 17th); then San Francisco for the 23rd. I'll debark there, and go to Los Angeles by train, as I'll save three days that way. Haven't decided which way I'll go from there to Chicago; a letter from Myra indicates that if I'm to see her, it will have to be en route, either in Chicago or somewhere on the way, so I'm waiting for further word from her as to where we can meet. Except for that, I shall probably come Santa Fe and see the Grand Canyon. Think I told you Vena Radley, another Peking missionary, is to travel with me, and I've just found out that Dr. Lydia Ch'en, our doctor in Tientsin, who is to have a McDowell Scholarship next year, will be my cabin-mate all the way across; she is lovely, and I'm happy to have her. I am so looking forward to the trip; if it is as lovely as it was twelve years ago by that route, it will be just about perfect.

The perfectly darling picture of Donald that mother forwarded came to keep me company in bed, and how I have loved it. If I hadn't been going to see him soon, it would certainly have plunged me into a dose of homesickness. I'm supposing that the man in the picture is my brother-in-law, but have no way of knowing; my little Chinese doctor said, "it must be his father; he wouldn't be looking at any other man like that!" - which seemed to me quite reasonable! I hope he likes to be squeezed (Donlad, I mean!) for if he doesn't, either he or I shall have a bad time of it. What joy it will be to see those babies - to say nothing about the rest of you.

Mabel Nowlin spent twenty-four hours here last week, and stayed in our suite; it was good to have her, and especially so since she had seen mother, Lois, and Donald, and traveled with Mrs. Tomlinson. Marie Adams is back too, having seen Lois in Evanston, and Blanche Helland at Rice Lake.

This week-end we are to have Sherwood Eddy here at Yenching. He is spending ten days around Peking, but as our vacation comes next week, we can only have him for Saturday and Sunday.

I'm not sure yet just what I shall do with my vacation. Had planned to spend it shopping and packing; but since folks think I need to rest, I' shall probably spend half of it at the Hills. Have told the Seniors that I'll go with them if they want to go; but they are so busy with theses that I'm afraid they'll not, in which case I'll probably take my roommate off for the first few days, then come back and go to the city for my buying. My wardrobe is slowly getting into shape; but I'm waiting to have the new dress made until nearer time to use it.

It is six o'clock, and I still have a lesson to get for tomorrow before I go home. So will stop this. Love and love to you every one.

Mamma.

Yenching, Peiping.
April 15th, 1930.

Dearest family,

Tempus certainly is fugiting right along; have hardly turned around since I wrote you last, yet I'm morally certain it is at least two weeks! A few more periods of that length, and there'll be no need for letters - Hoopee!

I wrote just after I came back from my week-end in the hospital, I think. That was the last week before vacation, and was soon gone. I stayed at home over the week-end, then on Monday morning my room-mate and I went out to the Hills for a couple of days. We've lived together for nearly two years, but this was the first time we had gone off to play together, and we did enjoy it. On Tuesday we took a fifteen-mile trip by donkey and on foot, to one of the most attractive temples and back; the day was perfect, and the valley filled with apricot-trees in full blossom - beautiful. We were sorry our stay in the Hills could be only two days long; but Ruth Stahl and her associate in the music department were giving a concert in the city Wednesday evening, which I very much wanted to attend; so we came back here Wednesday morning, I spent the afternoon doing some Christian Fellowship work, then went in on the evening bus. And the concert certainly was worth going to - two pianos, and piano and pipe-organ. I stayed at the mission all night, and spent part of the next day buying things to bring home to you-all, then came back here. Friday I just turned my trunks and boxes upside down, so I know now pretty well what is to be given away, what thrown away, and what preserved. The packing will not be a very large task when I get at it; shall begin on my books soon, and leave the rest until nearer going away time.

Mother's letter of the 25th, with Lois' enclosed, came today. I'm terribly sorry Father is going to have to be away in August, and sorry if Lois won't be in Chicago when I get there. If Margie and Aunt Orpha are to be away too, I'd just as well come via St. Paul and save a few days. If you can let me know a little more about their plans, I'll know what to do. When am I going to see Lois? I suppose I really can't expect all the camps to accommodate themselves to my schedule, but I don't want to have to wait too long for the other half of my family. Looks like I'd better run right along to Barron, and "sit tight", and let you come and see me when you can! Where is the camp Father is attending? Mother and I ought to get ourselves well talked out, night wahr, with no one else around?

I'm spending my spare time this week working on a picnic the Christian Fellowship is having in connection with its annual meeting day after tomorrow. Over four hundred of us if they all get there, but they'll not. About forty faculty families are acting as hosts and furnishing the food for the rest, whom they invite as their guests; all these family lists I had to make out and send out last week. This University Church of ours is a most interesting affair, and one could do full-time work on it, without another thing to do. I'd rather like to try it.

We have been having quite a treat these last days. Sherwood Eddy and Kirby Page (editor of The World Tomorrow) are this far on their journey which began a year ago; they have been all through Europe, and in Turkey and India, and they have much to tell. We had a little group meeting with Kirby Page last Saturday, in which he told us many things about Ghandi and India, the Philippines, and so on; for two straight hours he talked and answered questions. Yesterday Eddy has been here, and today, (excuse my English!), for lectures to the students; and we are greatly enjoying it. A man who has worked with students for thirty-five years, and been in nearly every country on the globe, has a good deal to say.

I wonder if mother took her trip to Uncle Charley's? Here is he, in Iowa? I hope you did, mother, even if it does mean you can't meet me in Chicago, and it was fine to have the chance to go with Uncle Jim.

It is late afternoon, and I still have a lesson to prepare for eight o'clock tomorrow morning; so guess I'd better stop. I'm glad Russell and Margie and Peggy got up to Barron. When is Russell likely to get home again?

Heaps of love to you all,

Monona

Yenching - Peking,
May 5th, 1930.

Dear Family,

Mother says I needn't send four copies any more, since Father is at home; but since Russell has gone back, perhaps I'd better continue it - since I suppose mother does write to him once in a while! "Half the family" ought to have a quarter of the letter, don't you think?

It's great fun to think that this letter you probably can't answer before I leave for Japan; hope to have the answer there though. And I need to emphasize again, especially in view of the fact that most of my family have forgotten how to write letters, that I shall need instructions at San Francisco as to where you all are, and what you want me to do. Mother's letter last week says Margie and the kiddies will be with Russell in Montana, and I'd better come home via them. In that case I shall need to know one or two things: (1) where in Montana are they? (2) will they have room for me if I come? (not that I need a very big space; I'd be quite willing to sleep on the floor for the sake of seeing "you-all"; but I don't want to be a nuisance); and (3) how do I get there? All this I ought to know as soon as the boat arrives, for if I'm going the northern way, the trip to Los Angeles will be a side-trip; but if not, I can buy a through ticket via L.A. from San Francisco. Also, if I'm going that way, with the extra expense, and if I'm stopping there so that I can't get home anyway before Father leaves for camp, I might decide to go on by boat to Los Angeles, which will save me some money, but cost me three days more of time. So it's quite important that I know what you want me to do. If I could know at Honolulu, it would be much better; then I could have my plans all made before I land; in that case you'd need to send the word in plenty of time to reach there by the 17th of July (better allow three weeks). It gives me a queer feeling to think of you all so scattered, and I do want to see you all as soon as possible; so I hope you'll at least send me a steamer letter to tell me how I can do it. I certainly am glad that Russell and his family can have the summer together, and I want to get in on it if I can! Mother didn't say where Father's camp is to be; is it near enough so I can go and see him, or half-way across the state? And by the way, mother, when I tell you when I'm arriving, don't get out the brass band; I'd rather see you first, and the band afterward! Not many people are likely to go to Cameron after me, but they might find it easier to meet the ten o'clock! But probably none but my relatives and two or three best friends are likely to; so this warning probably isn't needed - but you know how I hate a fuss!

Suppose you all know by this time that according to reports we are about to be under a new government, whose capital is to be Peking (with the old name), and whose officials are in the process of being set up, chief among them Feng Yu Hsiang and Yen Hsi Shan. Looks like war would really begin in good earnest in a few days; though we hope not. A good many people here are in favor of the new government, for Chiang has not been popular here; and the easiest

way to improve things is the age-long one of revolt. So it looks as if we were scheduled for a divided country again, as nearly as one can see. Makes one think of some church unity projects - desirable if the unity can be under my particular banner. At any rate things are quiet at present; there have been one or two communistic street meetings; but the students holding them were promptly clapped into prisons and some are still waiting trial. I don't favor that method of dealing with Communists myself, either here or in America; but it seems to be temporarily effective, however much of a boomerang it may prove later. Of course there will be great rejoicing on the part of the north if Peking can really be made a capital again; we've never recovered either economically or sentimentally from that loss.

It is time for the mail to go out; so I must get this closed up, though it hasn't much news in it. It will at least tell you I'm still alive, and starting home in less than eight weeks; the rest you can wait for until I get there!

Love and love,

Minerva.

Mother don't worry about the braces.. heard!- or hurt anyone's feelings - but you know I'd rather get there before many folks know it.